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ABSTRACT

A case study was conducted to examine the implicit beliefs and practices of one white high school mathematics teacher in the context of race. The study explores the subtle ways in which the dominant, hegemonic ideology and discourse saturates everyday life in schools. The teacher studied was a white females mathematics teacher in a small town high school in the Midwest with 19 years of teaching experience. The student population was 67% white, 24.3% black, and the remainder of various ethnicities. The teacher was observed for eight class periods and was interviewed on six different occasions. She saw herself as an advocate for students with special needs and was maternal and affectionate toward her students. She tended to see mathematics as removed from culture, and only related it to the everyday life of students in a superficial way. In a sense, her care for her students may be viewed as paternalistic and hegemonic in that it reifies existing power relationships. While she recognized that personal and family problems are related to systemic problems, she did not make the connection that systemic problems are disproportionately inflicted on people of color. This teacher was in conflict over racism, and inexperienced in discussing issues of race, and she was more likely to attribute discrepancies in mathematics education to family and parent support and the poor teaching of elementary school teachers than to race. However, this teacher expressed willingness to explore issues of race and teaching, illustrating possibilities for change. Some suggestions are offered for promoting teacher dialogue about race. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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One High School Teacher's Unexamined Pedagogy of Race

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Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual conference, April 13-17, 1998, San Diego, CA.

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One High School Math Teacher's Unexamined Pedagogy of Race

Having taught African American and Latino students for eight years in Brooklyn, New York, I have developed a mission to improve the education of students who are so often margianlized by the ideologies and practices that dominate American schools. I could guess at countless reasons for the academic failure of the students whom I have known to be capable of greatness: poverty, racism, lack of educational resources, racism, school politics, racism, bad teachers, racism. I think the point is clear; racism underlies all of the possible reasons. As a teacher, I felt empowered to control only one form of racism, my own attitudes and beliefs. As a graduate student in education, I have come to understand that I was viewing racism as an individual phenomenon, not as a systemic, societal, and civilizational (Scheurich & Young, 1997) problem. I still assert, however, that the individual and collective beliefs of teachers are a crucial level at which we can understand how individual and broader forms of racism continue to exist in our nation's schools and in our society.

In this paper I assert that teachers' racial ideologies and beliefs about racism in general, can be significant factors that contribute to the academic success or failure of their students. I hope to establish the centrality of the role of teachers' beliefs and understandings of racism in improving the education of students of color. Dominant paternalistic ideologies of individualism and meritocracy (Jackman, 1994) permeate society's institutions and individual beliefs. The taken-for-grantedness of the dominant ideologies among teachers can have a devastating effect on students of color.

The schools of America's largest cities already serve a majority population comprised of students of color; and given the current demographic trends, by the year 2000, forty percent of all students will be of color (Secada, 1990). In stark contrast to the student population, schools, both in and out of large urban areas, are staffed by

predominately white, female teachers (Sleeter, 1993; Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992). This racial incongruence, combined with the low academic achievement (by low academic achievement, I refer to higher drop-out rates, lower standardized test scores, and lower college enrollment) of students of color has lead to a growing debate about the ability of white teachers to educate African American and Latino students (Delpit, 1995; Haberman, 1996; Sleeter, 1993). Responses to the cultural mismatch between urban students and teachers have included a strong avocation to recruiting more teachers of color, and an invocation to make teacher education more critical and multicultural in content and practice (Sleeter, 1993). However, neither of these approaches deal with the fundamental problem of racism that is endemic to our society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and perpetuated, in part, by the "hidden curriculum" of schooling; that is the implicit messages, values, meanings and beliefs that reflect the inequalities in society, and are perpetuated through unexamined practices of schools (Stodolsky, 1988).

The differential achievement between white students and students of color is most evident in the areas of mathematics and science (Oakes, Ormseth, Bell, & Camp, 1990). Reyes and Stanic (in Burton, 1994) propose five factors to explain the achievement differential in mathematics: (a) societal influences, (b) school mathematics curriculum, (c) teacher attitudes, (d) student attitudes and achievement behavior, and (e) classroom practices. These factors are interrelated in complex ways, each influencing the other to some extent; however, I assert that teacher attitudes and beliefs are key to altering all five factors. The unexamined racial ideologies of white teachers reinforce the status quo in which "whiteness is positioned as normative and everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of oppression" (Ladson-Billings, in press). By disrupting and deconstructing the ways in which the status quo permeate teachers' beliefs and practices, we may begin to reconstruct what is considered normative and eventually construct

equitable and socially just institutions for students who are typically marginalized by the dominant ideologies that control schools.

The first two factors proposed by Reyes and Stanic, societal norms and Eurocentric mathematics curriculum (Secada, 1990), go largely unexamined by white teachers who have achieved success within society's norms and through the curriculum. In fact, the perpetuation of these norms and curriculum work to secure whites a position of privilege in society. Therefore there is no incentive to examine and challenge these practices because most teachers have no first-hand experience with how they oppress and contribute to the under achievement of students of color. Practices in mathematics classrooms reflect this dysconscious racism (King, 1991) by assuming that the dehumanized, decontextualized, product-oriented emphasis on transmitting knowledge from teacher to student that is typical of high school math classrooms is value and bias-free (Battista, 1994; Burton, 1994; Oakes et al., 1990; Secada, 1990; Volmink, 1994). The teaching practices and curriculum in classrooms in the U.S. present math as separate from everyday human activity, rather than as a way to explain our world. This presentation sets up a hegemonic system that links mathematics achievement, which is closely linked to social and economic power, with some mystical special ability inherent in an elite group of students. The individualistic, competitive, single-method, product-oriented mathematics curriculum and instruction is resonant of the male-dominated, Eurocentric culture and learning style (Burton, 1994). Teachers perpetuate this hegemony failing to recognize their role in the racism inherent in society, or by denying its existence all together. Policies such as tracking and departmental organization (Gutierrez, 1996; Oakes et al., 1990) are often a result of these unexamined practice.

Another factor proposed by Reyes and Stanic that is mediated by teacher beliefs is classroom practice. Students are more likely to persist in mathematics if the subject is seen as interesting and related to real life (Oakes et al., 1990). Classroom practices which

adversely affect the motivation for girls and students of color to study mathematics include; lack of emphasis on decision making, emphasis on whole group teaching and drill, less individualized instruction, concern with discipline and control, use of explicit and public criticism, and stress on competition. Teachers often engage in these classroom practices that fail to meet the needs of students who do not conform to dominant learning styles or values. Stringent curriculum guidelines, time constraints, and bureaucratic pressures make it difficult for even the most dedicated teachers to address the difficulty that many of their students have in mathematics. Furthermore, many teachers are reluctant to acknowledge racial and ethnic differences in learning and therefore do little to adjust their instruction to address the cultural incongruence between themselves and students of color.

Reyes and Stanic's remaining factors, teacher attitude and student attitude and achievement, are best examined in terms of their relationship to each other. The reluctance or inability to accept and address cultural differences in learning style, and to examine and address the racism inherent in society and the curriculum, has perpetuated an attitude among many teachers that the failure of students of color is a result of some cultural or character deficit in the students, their families, or their communities (Irvine & York, 1993). The attitudes of teachers are integrally related to societal norms, accepted curriculum, classroom practices, and ultimately student attitudes and achievement.

The failure of teacher education programs to address racism as a critical factor in the under achievement of students of color perpetuates hegemonic ideologies and practices among teachers. In effect, the silence of schools of education about racial equity ensures that schools will maintain the status quo of embedded racism. It is still acceptable to explain the failure of students of color to some deficit outside of the reach of educators, rather than considering that educators may be part of the problem. This issue is addressed by Delpit:

> Teacher education usually focuses on research that links failure and socioeconomic status, failure and cultural difference, and failure and single-parent household. It is hard to believe that these children can possibly be successful after their teachers have been so thoroughly exposed to so much negative indoctrination. (Delpit, 1995, p.172)

Students are unlikely to have a positive attitude about school if they are not recognized in the curriculum, if they receive instruction that devalues them, and if their teachers perceive their cultures and families as deficient. Payne (Payne, 1984) asserts that , "teacher behavior varies systematically with the race and class of students" (p.19) and that teacher expectations are ascribed by status-related characteristics. Those expectations influence the quality and quantity of teaching which is likely to affect the achievement of students. Oakes (Oakes et al., 1990) also asserts that there is a "close connection between educators' judgments about students' intellectual ability and the educational experiences that follow from those judgments" (p.17). Therefore the failure to recognize the abilities of students of color, and the erroneous belief that certain students lack the ability to learn math are likely to create self-fulfilling prophesies (Good & Brophy, 1997).

My assertion that teacher beliefs is the crucial component in changing the educational outcomes of students of color does not imply a quick fix to educational inequality. Nor does it counter the belief that we need more teachers of color in the teaching profession. As many researchers have pointed out (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Dilworth, 1992; Gillette, 1996; King, 1991; Sleeter, 1993), white teachers are resistant to changing their beliefs and practices. It is safer to adopt a "color-blind" approach, or to accept a deficit explanation for the failure of students of color than to admit one's own role in racial oppression. Despite these difficulties, I assert that it is imperative that we find and foster ways to help teachers identify, examine, and alter their beliefs and practices.

Otherwise, we are accepting the status quo, and losing a generation of children while we try to attract more teachers of color.

The purpose of this case study is to examine the implicit beliefs and practices of one white high school mathematics teacher. By framing this research in the context of race, I hoped to get at some of the unexamined beliefs and practices that may impact student achievement in mathematics. Teachers beliefs have been examined in the context of mathematics content and in methods of teaching and learning mathematics (Battista, 1994). Little has been done to examine how students' race impacts teacher beliefs about the content and instruction of mathematics. I hope to view the social process of teaching mathematics using race as a lens. The purpose of this case study is not to critique one high school teacher, but to examine the subtle ways that dominant, hegemonic ideology and discourse saturate our everyday life. The point is to expose the unexamined pedagogy and curriculum that are practiced on a daily basis in our schools. I chose to look at one teacher, not because she was so different from most other teachers, but because she is so like many of us in our inability to see how racism pervades our practice.

Most of the literature regarding teachers' perceptions about race paint negative portraits of white teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Gillette, 1996; King, 1991; Montero-Seiburth, 1996; Sleeter, 1993; Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992). The research has indicated that most White teachers maintain a "colorblindness" or deficit explanation with regard to the success or failure of their students of color. These researchers have clearly identified the limitations of many white teachers and have documented the difficulty in changing the beliefs and attitudes of White teachers about race. A careful reading of this literature has left me disheartened and discouraged. I realize, however, that although some researchers have met with minimal success in identifying and developing culturally relevant teaching practices in white teachers (Aguilar & Pohan, 1996; Gillette, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994), few have documented the subtle ways that color-blind, affectionate, and

paternalistic attitudes can preserve the power structures that exist in our schools and society. This case attempts to document those attitudes and practices that safeguard the status quo.

This case is relevant to students of color in general, but also to issues in urban education because the majority of people entering the teaching field are white women from small towns who typically express a desire to teach in small towns serving middle income students (Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992). This information must reflect a set of beliefs that many teachers hold about low-income, urban students of color. By examining the beliefs of a veteran teacher who is white, female, from a small town, who teaches in an ethnically and economically diverse small-town school, I have attempted to unearth some of the myths, stereotypes, and unexamined ideologies surrounding teachers' perceptions and practices regarding students of color. These beliefs and practices seem less linked to the individual teacher or to context (urban, rural, small-town) and more associated with student race and the embededness of racism in institutional ideology .

The Case

Methodology

Knowing that I wanted to look at the beliefs and practices of a high school math teacher, I began my quest by asking colleagues if they knew any math teachers who might like to be the subject of a case study. I was put in touch with a math teacher at Chattanooga High School through another faculty member there. Mrs. L. volunteered to participate immediately. She was excited about the prospect of getting feedback on her teaching and was extremely generous with her time.

Mrs. L. is a 19 year veteran mathematics teacher who was raised in a small, Midwest town, went to college in a different small, Midwest town, and now teachers and lives in yet another small, Midwest town. Since most of the research on white teachers

beliefs about race has been conducted with pre-service teachers, I thought it would be interesting to examine the beliefs of this older, more experienced, "typical" white teacher.

In an attempt to gain access to the beliefs of Mrs. L. , I choose to use interviews and classroom observations as my primary data gathering methods. The use of qualitative methodology was most likely to afford me the opportunity to make connections between the teacher's stated beliefs and her classroom practices. Since I, the observer, was the primary data gathering tool, I felt it was necessary to identify some of my own biases prior to conducting interviews and observations. As a white teacher, with experience in teaching African American and Latino students left me with a sense of the inequity between the educational experiences of white students and students of color. My experience has led me to believe that many teachers hold lower expectations for students of color, and that schools that serve large populations of African American and Latino students are designed to feed into those low expectations. The schools at which I worked were wrought with staffing changes, apathetic teachers, and minimal resources.

Since the setting of this study was different from the schools at which I worked in a number of ways, I tried to adopt an etic, or outsider, perspective. First of all, the school at which the study took place was not in a large city school system, rather it was in a small town serving mainly white students. Secondly, this was a high school; all of my experience had been in elementary schools. Finally, I was studying a mathematics teacher; math was a subject with which I never identified myself, although I taught mathematics as part of my elementary school curriculum. However, I strongly believe that math is a subject that can empower students, and should be taught in a way that makes it accessible to all students. As a student who fit the stereotype that "girls aren't good in math," I tried to acknowledge the ability of all students in my math teaching; I encouraged experimentation and problem solving, and tried to make math meaningful by relating mathematics to real life.

My acknowledged biases were; that schools are set up to facilitate the failure of students of color, that math should be taught in a way that acknowledges various learning styles, and that many teachers hold low expectations of students of color. Given that set of acknowledged biases, I entered Mrs. L's class with the assumption that she would participate in practices and ideologies that marginalize students of color. Knowing that I engage in hegemonic practices and beliefs of which I am unaware left me wondering if I would be able to identify them in someone else. I knew that I could identify lowered expectations and more overt forms of racism, but I was not sure that I could identify the more subtle ways that institutionalized ideologies are acted upon to maintain the status quo. As such, I set out to see how one teacher constructed race in her racially mixed, small-town high school classes.

Over the course of five weeks, I observed Mrs. L. during eight, fifty-minute class periods: one upper-level Algebra 3 class, two upper-level Trigonometry classes, and five Algebra 1 classes. During this time I did not participate in the classroom activities, I sat in the back of the room and took notes. I also interviewed Mrs. L. on six different occasions during the semester for approximately forty-five minutes each. I used a semi-structured interview format in which I had some predetermined questions, but generally allowed the conversation to progress naturally. Of these six interviews, four were audio taped and transcribed. During the following summer, I conducted a two hour interview with Mrs. L. to follow up on some of the issues that had begun to emerge.

My study was limited by my reluctance to challenge Mrs. L.'s beliefs. I was fearful of influencing her responses so I rarely shared my own perspective on issues of race. This made my quest to find out why teachers hold certain perceptions almost impossible. Another limitation was the fact that I did not interview students to triangulate my data.

My data analysis was deductive; I looked for classroom behaviors to support the teacher's stated beliefs, and I looked for the influences of dominant, color-blind, affectionate, and paternalistic ideology that influenced her teaching. My interpretation of the data was through the lens of critical race theory and multicultural education. Since race was the lens through which I viewed the classroom practices of Mrs. L., I used Delpit's (Delpit, 1995) characteristics of good teachers of students of color, and Ladson-Billings' (Ladson-Billings, 1994) criteria for culturally relevant teaching to examine Mrs. L.'s beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. By using these criteria, I was able to investigate the complexity of her perceptions about students of color.

The Setting

The setting for this study is Chattanooga High School (all names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the participant); a public, academic high school serving the population of Chattanooga. The combined population of this town and it's adjacent town is approximately 130,000. The smaller town of Chattanooga is generally regarded as having more of a connection with the large university within it. The adjoining town has a greater populous, and contains the larger business district.

Chattanooga High is the only public high school in the town and has a total enrollment of 1,252 students. Its student population is 67% White, 24.3% Black, 2.2% Hispanic, 6.05% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. It should be noted that there are a number of international / foreign-born students that attend the school while their parents study or work at the university. Of the total student population, 24.8% are considered low-income, 1.5% are Limited English Proficient, and the school dropout rate is 5.0%. The school's overall rate of attendance is 87.8% with a chronic truancy rate of 3.0%. The average class size, based on an average for the second and fifth periods is 13.4 students per class. However, the classes that I observed ranged in size from 17 students in the trigonometry class, to 24 students in the Algebra 1 class.

The teacher statistics are based on the district totals, not on Chattanooga High School alone. Of the 347 teachers in the district, 17.3% are male, 90.5% are White, 8.0% are Black, 0.3% are Hispanic, and 1.2% are Asian/ Pacific Islander. Within the Math department at Chattanooga High School, there are 6 female teachers, and 2 male teachers, all of whom are White.

The school has a high school graduation rate of 75.2% which is lower than the State average of 80.5%. Since this case study deals with the beliefs and practices of a mathematics teacher, I will only provide standardized test data for math. According to the state standardized Math achievement test for the academic year 1995, 24% of tenth graders at Chattanooga did not meet the established state performance goals, 47% of tenth graders met the goals, and 28% exceeded the state goals.

The data presented here tells us little about the differential achievement of students of color at Chattanooga High School, but it does tell us that there are far fewer teachers of color than there are students of color. It also tells us that one fourth of the school population is underachieving on standardized Mathematics tests, and that same number of students is failing to graduate on time. The statistics, however, don't tell about the school's general climate and culture.

The school is set in a quiet residential community and is surrounded by a large front lawn and playing fields. The school building is clean and orderly. The halls are quiet and the facilities appear to be new. As I entered the building for the first time, I was struck by the sterility of the building. The only hall decorations were a few posted notices. Perhaps my background in elementary schools has made me accustomed to colorful displays of student work. The building, too, was like a maze. After approximately nine visits, I would still get lost. Luckily, there was a faculty member posted in each hallway throughout the school day, so I always had someone to ask for directions.

I presume that the calm tone in the hallway was a result of the faculty members on hall-duty. Change of periods seemed very calm compared to the junior high school in which I had previously worked. The students all walked from class to class chatting in reasonable tones. The change of classes lasted only a few minutes, students did not linger in the hallways. During class periods, there seemed to be few students in the halls. Occasionally a student would be seen walking down the hall, always with a hall pass prominently displayed.

Mrs. L.'s classroom was on the third floor of the school building. It seemed bright and sunny despite the fact there are only two small windows. The combination of fluorescent lighting and light-colored walls added to the illusion. The attached chair / desk contraptions were arranged in orderly rows. Most of the walls were painted cinder block except for two chalkboards on which there was rarely anything written. The three bulletin boards inside the classroom were blank except for one school memo, and a Garfield sign which reads, "If you believe it, you can achieve it".

Mrs. L.'s classroom was bare by my standards. The only student materials that were visible were a stack of textbooks piled on the radiator. In the corner of the room Mrs. L. had a desk at which she kept her belongings; books, pens, pencils, papers, etc. In the front and center of the room was another teacher desk with an overhead projector beside it. This was the place that Mrs. L. sat during her lessons. She sat facing the class using the overhead projector to work out mathematical equations.

Mrs. L. used the overhead daily for the bulk of each period. She usually began class by reviewing the homework. In her Algebra 1 class, she walked around and checked that the homework was done before working out problems on the overhead. In the higher level classes that I observed, she just asked for questions about the homework and began explaining individual problems. After about a twenty minute homework review, Mrs. L. would usually introduce a new topic and explain the computations at the overhead. After

another twenty minutes, Mrs. L would assign an in-class problem for the students to work on independently. During this time, she allowed students to talk and work together as she assisted individual students. Finally, Mrs. L. typically assigned that evening's homework and allowed the students to begin working on it. Most students usually socialized until the bell rang.

Mrs. L.

Her history. Mrs. L. is a friendly woman in her mid-forties. She is quite pleasant and easy to talk to. She has been teaching math at Chattanooga High for nine years. Prior to that she was a teacher at Chattanooga Middle School for five years. She grew up in a town of about 40,000 people and has known since about the fifth grade that she wanted to enter teaching.

> I had a good fifth grade teacher and from fifth grade on I decided I wanted to be a teacher. She was hard, she was not a very nice person (laughs). So of course she was a good one. She taught me how to study and I thought it was a neat thing to do. Then I went into college to study teaching and I got straight A's in Math. That's why I was a math teacher. I always thought math was fun so, that's why I am here.

Interestingly, one of the qualities that the attributes to a good teacher is meanness'. I never witness Mrs. L. act in a way that I would consider "mean" or "not nice". In fact she often used humor with the students to build a rapport within the class. She did however demand that students remain quiet during explanations and direct instruction.

Mrs. L. went to a large state school for her Bachelor's degree and stayed in that town of about 5,000 to teach middle school for five years while she got her Master's degree in Special Education. She sometimes uses her background in Special Education while working with her students in mathematics.

> A lot of the stuff that I learned was kinda common sense stuff. We learned specific things like how to teach reading and all that stuff. A lot of that stuff that was like "yeah, that makes

> sense" going back and repeating, if they don't get it by writing it down, then we read it to them or have them read it back. 'Course it's common sense after somebody tells you about it. So I used a lot of it...it's been real helpful through the years. Especially since we have so many kids that are labeled and a lot of the teachers don't realize what the definitions are as far as IQ and you know all those kind of things. There's things I tell the parents that...to get extra things for the kids that they don't know about...things that they're entitled to. I probably cause trouble. That's okay. I can live with that.

In this sense, Mrs. L. sees herself as an advocate for children with special needs. Mrs. L. never identified what criteria she used to determine special needs, nor did she ever question the values implicit in IQ testing and labeling children. She unquestioningly accepted the societal norms for diagnosing disabilities in children, yet she advocated for students and families to get as many services as possible. In this way, she was a rebel who wanted to make the system work for what she believed was the best interest of the child.

Her image as a teacher. Mrs. L. identifies herself primarily as a math teacher and has come to prefer working with the older students. She is happy with her working conditions at Chattanooga High School and expresses a fondness for all of her students. She sees herself as an advocate for students with other staff members who don't relate as well to students. Mrs. L. also sees herself as a friend to students.

> I think that it is probably threatening to some of the kids to get personal. I feel real comfortable here, and I try to make the kids feel comfortable even if they are not doing well in class. You know if they are not doing well, I don't hold that against them the next day. There are teachers in the building that don't do that. There's classes that they find threatening. In one sense I don't think the administration does enough to completely alleviate some of those teacher problems. There are teachers that they know of that are intimidating kids. They've been here a long time so nobody's willing to step on their toes. Doesn't make it right.

In this regard, Mrs. L feels very maternal and affectionate toward all of her students. She truly wants what is best for them and is willing to go against other teachers who she sees as unjust. Much of her image as a teacher who accepts and likes students as people regardless of their academic effort seems to come from her role as a mother of two boys with very different motivations for learning.

> I have two kids at home that are at total opposite ends of the spectrum. My 7th grader you never, have to ask him whether he's got homework or any thing. He takes it upon himself.. He gets it done, he knows what's due, he paces himself.....He's just good, he's always been real good at that since he's been little. And my 5th grader, my gosh I mean, he has late assignments every other day . And he never knows what's due, never writes anything down, and they've been raised in the same household. ... they've grown up with the same values, and they're totally opposites.

Mrs. L clearly recognized that her own children are different from each other despite their similar home situation, but she sometimes attributed the behaviors of other students solely to their home lives.

Mrs. L.'s Beliefs About Mathematics

Mathematics is removed from culture. Mrs. L. sees math as a very straight forward subject,

> "I think teaching is pretty easy overall, if you deal with it real logically and treat everyone the same."

On any given day, Mrs. L. is seated at the front and center of her classroom, working out problems on the overhead projector. Students are seated facing her in rows of chairs attached to desks arranged in a 5 x 6 matrix. She goes through the textbook and reviews problems from the previous night's homework assignment. During this homework review, only those students who have completed their homework may ask for a problem to be reviewed. As she explains the steps of the problem at hand, Mrs. L. will

write out and label each step, occasionally asking students if they "get it." When introducing new mathematics topics, a similar teaching method is employed. The students have almost no role in the construction of knowledge, Mrs. L. has the information and distributes it in a systematic fashion.

According to Battista (Battista, 1994), focusing on step-by-step computational rules is a way of imparting knowledge on students which is in direct contrast to the NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) standards that are geared toward improving the achievement of students of color. The NCTM standards state that students should have numerous and varied interrelated experiences to solve complex problems. Students should read, write, and discuss mathematics. The inherent belief that math is a set of procedures to be learned through direct instruction is viewed as one of the obstacles to the mathematics achievement of students of color.

Although her observable classroom practices do not reflect the NCTM's suggestions, Mrs. L.'s explanation of the ideal classroom for teaching all students mathematics agrees with the NCTM recommendations in some respects. She does not see that it is possible to be the type of teacher that she wants to be given the constraints of class size and curriculum to be covered.

> I think probably the biggest problem is class size. I think if you had a class size of maybe 20 at the most, that is not gonna happen, but there's a lot more things you could do as far as hands on, and helping kids with when they don't understand stuff. There's some kids that you just have to talk to individually and just guide them through the process and you can't do that with 30 kids in a room. But I'd try to make the class size smaller, have more activities where they can actually do a lot more manipulations. We're restricted a lot by the amount of material we have to cover so we can't do a lot of discover type things because then you don't get through the algebra curriculum. Smaller class size and more time. I think, given any student at all with at least average intelligence, I mean they don't have to be a genius, I think

> anybody can learn algebra. I mean its a real abstract subject, but if I am sitting down one on one, I could explain Algebra to anybody.

Mrs. L.'s Trigonometry class has 17 students and her Calculus class has 15; but she feels unable to do "discovery-type" learning due to time constraints and the amount of material that she has to cover. Although she mentions "discovery type" learning, her comments indicate that she feels that the best way for students to learn is through a transmission model. For example, even in her ideal classroom setting, Mrs. L. sees learning as best accomplished by her sitting down one-to-one with a student and explaining it. Her in-class teaching practices are consistent with this belief.

There was some evidence that Mrs. L. holds the transmission model because she is unaware of the value in other methods. During a discussion on how African American students may have culturally different learning styles than those typically catered to by schools, I explained my view that schools are set up to foster individual achievement and static knowledge transmission from teacher to child and that this might be incongruous with the cultural learning styles of many African American children.

Mrs. L. seemed interested by this information. In fact, she said that she wanted to learn more about it. This openness to cultural differences indicated that she is interested in exploring other possibilities that might help her students achieve and of the deep caring that she expresses toward her students. This exchange of information provided a window into the possibilities that Mrs. L. sees for herself as a teacher. Unfortunately, our conversation never reached the level of discussing how typical teaching practices are inherently racist.

Math as it relates to real life. According to Volmink (Volmink, 1994), in order for teachers to make mathematics relevant to students of color, they must situate it in everyday life. He asserts that teachers must (a) create situated, authentic, contextualized problems, (b) contextualize math around anti-racism, equality of opportunity, and social justice, and (c) utilize a critical pedagogy concerned with empowerment and emancipation from fears of

intellectual inadequacy. Since Mrs. L. sees math as straight-forward and removed from culture, she has never considered the political nature of knowledge or of teaching.

> I've never been aware of any cultural differences that I would have had to deal with in the classroom. I know that there probably are a lot, but maybe that happens more in a classroom with discussion. Um, Math is a pretty straight forward kind of thing. You don't have to discuss moral, or ethical or legal kinds of things. I would imagine it would happen in a discussion class - in Social studies or something would be more prevalent.

Mrs. L. attempts at times to relate mathematics instruction to the everyday life of her students, but she does so in a superficial way. Mrs. L's attempts to relate the material to a purposeful use for the students refer to impressing people with their knowledge or getting into college. Although these are valuable goals to foster in students, her examples do not relate authentic purposes, nor do they relate to issues of social justice and empowerment. They do, however, highlight Mrs. L.'s choice to use good-natured humor as a way to build relationships with her students. She may actually use this humor to avoid discussions about the real-life relationship of mathematics because she is unclear of it herself.

Mrs. L.'s Beliefs About Teaching and Learning

Caring and Paternalism. Teachers and students negotiate a functional relationship in the classroom. Mrs. L develops this relationship around caring for her students. In one sense, her care for students may be viewed as paternalistic and hegemonic in that it reifies the existing power relationships.

Although the notion of "caring for" can have a number of different interpretations, students perceive those teachers who hold and enforce the highest expectations for both academics and behavior as most caring (Payne, 1984). Mrs. L. exhibits behaviors that both comply with and contradict this definition. For example, Mrs. L. assigns, and checks homework each day. She is diligent in her homework monitoring and clearly expects all students to comply. Apparently most do. However, during every class period that I

observed, I saw students who were reading material other than mathematics, or who had their head down on the desk, or who were simply sitting at their desks with no materials out whatsoever. Mrs. L. rarely asked these students to attend to the lesson. There seemed to be an unspoken treaty that 'as long as you are quiet, you don't have to attend to the lesson'.

Students have a desire to make their own decisions and feel in control. Since Mrs. L. is available almost every day after school for additional mathematics instruction, Students are permitted to make their own choices about whether or not to pay attention in class. Students have the option to attend the after school sessions. Mrs. L.'s dedication to her after school tutoring is an indication of how she cares for her students. It also supports the notion that she values one-to-one direct instruction over the messiness of the constructivist classroom.

For example, Mrs. L. shared this anecdote about one girl in class who I have observed in Algebra class either talking to other students or with her head down.

> ...math is difficult for her, she doesn't want to work hard at it. Except that the last week, she took a test about a week ago and she said she wanted to take it over. I said you haven't paid attention in class, so she couldn't take it over again. So she's been in every night that I've been here, she's come after school. And I let her take it over again last night and she did pretty well on it.

So, in one sense, Mrs. L. allows students to make their own decisions about their learning. She provides numerous opportunities for them to learn the subject without diversifying her instruction to build decision-making into classroom instruction. So her care for students does not include challenging them regularly and empowering them in the classroom. Students must in a sense, pull themselves up from their boot-straps on their own. No explicit demands are made of them.

Sense of agency. Mrs. L. believes that teachers need resources available for student referral. In one sense she is what Ladson- Billings (Ladson-Billings, 1994) would call a "general contractor". She identifies problems that students and families might have and then seeks resources to assist the child. Within this process, she maintains a belief that improvement is possible. She describes the willingness of the administration to assist with students:

> Well as far as the problems in the classroom, for individual students, they're willing to back the teachers up cause its not all our responsibility.

Likewise, Mrs. L. regards the parents as important allies in the learning process:

> Parents are pretty willing to help when you contact them. There are a number of parents that don't know what to do with their kids. But there's a whole lot of resources that you can direct them to or try, you know try to help them. Not that it always works but, it seems like its a community that's really ready to work to solve problems.

As far as her responsibility for students' learning and achievement, Mrs. L. feels that she is responsible to present the information. She feels strongly that students are responsible for their own learning and that a teacher cannot control students' motivation for learning or achievement. Her description of a lecture she gave to her class sums up her beliefs on her sense of responsibility:

> Well my second hour class just left and I gave them my fifty cent lecture. "I teach you, if you listen and don't understand, I teach it to you again I help you, but if you don't listen and you don't do your work there is nothing I can do to make you learn." ...."I can make you be quiet, I can't make you take notes, I can't make you do your do your homework but please don't come and whine at me that you don't understand it. If you haven't done your part I can't do anything about it."

Mrs. L.'s classroom practice is consistent with her stated beliefs. She rarely tires to engage students who are off-task, and does not allow those with incomplete homework to ask

questions during the homework review. This belief is consistent with the dominant ideology that people must operate as individuals to succeed in society. It leaves little room for collective action and responsibility.

During my first and second visit to Mrs. L.'s Algebra 1 class, I noticed one African American boy (I will refer to him as John), seated next to me in the rear of the classroom, who never picked up his Algebra book. He read his English book during one class period, and his Social Studies text book during my next visit. During my first visit, Mrs. L. did not address John or ask him to attend to the work. After the Algebra class left, I asked Mrs. L. about him. She said that she was aware that he was not attending, but that was his choice. Since he hadn't done the homework, he was not permitted to ask any questions during the first twenty minutes of class while homework was reviewed. During my second visit, while John was reading his Social Studies book, Mrs. L. was solving an equation at the overhead projector, she addressed him in an attempt to engage him in the subject:

> "Nothing is going to work if we solve for y, right John?" said Mrs. L. in an apparent attempt to catch John off-task. John continued reading. Another African American boy, Vince, seated at the rear of the class on the opposite side of John shouts, "JOHN!! Hello!!!!" John looks up and says, "Huh?" At this point Mrs. L. continues working on the problem and John goes back to reading his Social studies book.

Mrs. L.'s attempt to draw John into the lesson seemed aimed at letting him know that she was aware that he was off-task. She did not, however, try to engage him in solving the problem. She felt that it was his responsibility to be attentive in class. On my next visit, John's seat had been changed to the front of the class. Apparently, John had failed his last Algebra test:

> Mrs. L.: I got a call from um, from John's dad and John gave him the story "Oh its too noisy and I can't do my work". And we've kind of shifted that back to the fact that John

> wasn't doing his work and no it wasn't all that noisy and he needs to be working a little bit harder, but.....
>
> Me: Then you switched the seat up to the front; has that helped him ?.
>
> Mrs. L.: He doesn't say anything at all now. And when he gets something else , he doesn't get anything else out because I can see everything he does. He did not like to be moved up at all. I think right now he's angry. He's not gonna talk because he's angry. He is taking notes now everyday so I guess getting angry at me (laughs) gets him to do that, it solves my problem.

For the remainder of my visits, John was always attending to class, and was on-task. Mrs. L. never attributed this change in John's behavior to the influence of his father. She was reluctant to address the problem until the father called to express his concern. This tends to contradict Mrs. L.'s apparent care for her students. It is possible that there is a level of hierarchy to her beliefs. For example, she may feel that student responsibility is more important than demonstrating concern for students.

I am not sure that the race of this student had any impact on this situation, however it is not clear as to whether the student felt that race was a factor in Mrs. L's decision making process. There was only one student who Mrs. L. took a decidedly active initiative to keep on task. This was a White male in Algebra 1. Joe was a "fair" student, just "lazy", according to Mrs. L. so she felt that she should stay on top of him. She often asked him to attend to his work. On one occasion she even told him that he was not going to leave her class until his work was finished. This was highly inconsistent behavior for Mrs. L. who typically abdicated responsibility for students' achievement.

Attributions. Mrs. L. attributed the success or failure of her students to a number of factors. She generally believes that if a student works hard and applies him/herself, s/he will succeed. Her definition of success varies depending on her perception of the student's aptitude for mathematics. She often referred to students who were "strong in math" and

students who were "weak in math". For example when discussing the number of students who fail her classes, she asserts:

> I don't remember any of my Algebra kids failing except one boy that only came about once or twice a week. There was one boy that was here all the time but didn't do any work. One that didn't come to school. Nobody failed that was actually here and took the responsibility to do the work. I think they all passed. There were some Ds in there but...

Ds were taken as a fair grade in mathematics. The test average for Mrs. L.'s Algebra 1 class was 68.5. Mrs. L. felt that this was "a little low, but its probably a pretty good Bell curve." So, Mrs. L. believed that some students were just not good at math and a bell curve was expected.

Other than poor work habits, or lack of motivation, Mrs. L. attributed school failure to personal, social, and family problems. In response to my question about why kids fail her class, Mrs. L responded:

> A small group of it was that they couldn't do the work, but a lot of it was not being here, or being here and not doing anything. And we kinda had problems of what to do. They have to have stronger truancy laws and things like that. This community doesn't enforce truancy laws at all. Right? It's just not something that's important, for the police to be obeyed. DCFS laws enforce neglect but it's not neglect if the parent doesn't send the kid to school!? That's considered a school problem. The boy that failed because he wasn't coming has a mother who is a drug addict, and Mom doesn't get him up, but the kids' basically on his own. It's been this way since before he started school. And now that the kid's a sophomore...or freshman... he's started to get into trouble. He's a nice kid, smart kid...real smart kid. Nobody's ever taught him how to go about establishing those routines. So he's 13 years old with no good sleeping patterns, or waking up patterns which means that he won't have any good work ethic patterns. Nobody's willing to take the responsibility for it. Nobody's willing to take him out of his

> home and put him in the Children's Home where somebody can lay down some rules and get him back on a pattern.

These statements indicate that Mrs. L. sees less student failure related to social problems. This belief reinforces her sense of agency. The greater the social problem faced by the student, the less responsibility she must take for that student's achievement. Paradoxically, she recognizes social inequities that can pose obstacles to student achievement, but she does not recognize the systems as racist. She does not make the connection that these social, systemic problems are disproportionately inflicted upon people of color. Nor does she recognize that personal and family problems are related to these systemic problems. She continues to blame African American families and parents as though they have the same opportunities as she does.

Mrs. L's sees a strong correlation between parental responsibility and student achievement. She attributed many of the problems she faced with student motivation and failure to the students' family situations:

> In my opinion parenthood is not a right...it's a responsibility. And if you aren't responsible then I don't care if you gave birth to the child or not. You don't deserve him or her. And those kids deserve more. And sometimes I think they give the parents too many rights and they don't give the kids any chance at all.
>
> Later in the same interview:
>
> I think a lot a lot a lot of it does come from the parents because if the parents don't find education important then there' s very little hope for the kids. We've had kids whose parents have been real lax about even getting them to school. Some of those kids, if they like Math, then they do real well at it. But math is not a subject that a lot of kids like. So, I think it does go back to the parents, but then there's those kids where the parents try all they can and its just, its just the way the kid is. I think as long as you have the parents support behind it,

> they're willing to do the checking up on them and do the grounding if necessary, those kids will be successful eventually.

Mrs. L's assessment of family difficulty falls neatly within the dominant ideology of individualism. She assumes that all people have equal opportunities and therefore are able to achieve equal outcomes. She does not connect family situations with the earlier stated problems within society's institutions.

When I asked her about the factors within the school that contribute to the success or failure of students, Mrs. L. identified compensatory programs like Chapter One as one thing that the school does to address students who are at risk of failure. She also mentioned a peer mediation program to help students sort out their differences. The only in-school factor that she identified as contributing to students' failure, or risk of failure was peer relationships:

Mrs. L. feels that it is the school's responsibility to make every student feel safe. Her sense of student safety is correlated to the amount of control teachers have over students. She is very happy with the hall monitoring program that the school instituted a few years ago because it keeps the hallways calm and in control. Throughout the school day, there are teachers stationed in each hallway checking passes.

> The Hall Monitor is in direct response to things that have happened in the hallways when there's been nobody around. I think also it's the school's responsibility to keep the kids so that they feel safe coming here. We're supposed to be in control and that means that everybody has the right to feel comfortable and to be able to work.

Programs such as those mentioned by Mrs. L as beneficial to students have been argued by critical race theorists to support a deficit mode of intervention (Ladson-Billings, in press). Chapter One and Peer Mediation are typically over-represented by students of color and support dominant cultural norms which can marginalize students of color. The fact that Mrs. L cannot recognize any school factors that pose obstacles to students besides

the students themselves, indicates that she has not questioned the responsibility of the school in the failure to educate students of color

Mrs. L.'s Beliefs about Race

Urbanicity and colorblindness. Mrs. L. was often reluctant to discuss race. She usually spoke of student differences in terms of socioeconomic status and parental support. On my introductory visit, I told her that I was from New York City and interested in issues of urban education, and the education of students of color. I asked her about the racial composition of the school; she said, "We have African American students here. They are from ___ [low-income housing development]." She did not mention that any African American students came from other neighborhoods in the town.

Mrs. L. also recounted a story of her family vacation to New York. Apparently, Mrs. L. and her family got lost in New York City while they were driving from the airport to a friend's house in New Jersey. She mentioned that she was very scared because there was "no one who looked like us" in the neighborhood in which they were lost.

> I told the kids to lock the doors, I was so scared. I mean there were people playing basketball and stuff all over the streets. We drove straight through to New Jersey without even stopping for the bathroom. I told the kids they could go in a jar if they needed to. None of these people looked like us. So, I guess I do know what it feels like to be a minority.

Based on these statements, I have assumed that her perception of African Americans includes an image of poverty and social problems. She has a certain fear of African American people. Her assertion that this experience gave her a glimpse into what it feels like to a minority implies that she has given very little thought to the unequal distributions of power that permeate the daily experiences of people of color. She assumed that her experience of driving through an African American neighborhood was equivalent to what it feels like to be a member of a marginalized racial group.

When I asked her if she would ever teach in an inner-city school her answer was an unequivocal "no".

> My perception of inner city, whether its right or wrong, is that there are more social problems that the kid would be bringing in more family problems. I've never dealt with anybody in the inner city. It just seems to me that people wouldn't live in the inner city if they could get out. So that there's a whole array of money problems and jobs and all that kind of thing. My perception is, lets see, like NYPD blue, and those kind of things and you see the conditions that people live in. They wouldn't live there if they had means to get out and live in the suburbs or live in a small town or live someplace else. So it seems to me that would bring in a lot more family problems and, and social problems into the school.
>
> There would not be enough money in the world to influence my decision that way. I just don't think I would teach there. I wouldn't even consider it. I've seen too many movies probably and I don't think I'd feel safe on top of the whole thing. I think that's probably the biggest factor, the safety ; and that the problems just seem so overwhelming

Mrs. L believes certain negative stereotypes about people of color to be true. She clearly relates race to social problems. Since she believes social problems to be out of her control and attributes student failure to certain social problems, she is most likely to abdicate responsibility fro the learning of her African American students. She has not found it necessary to question her racial assumptions and has chosen to live in a neighboring town that is all white. Mrs. L. recounted a story about an African American teacher who refused to pick her up at her home when after learning where she lived. Apparently her colleague was afraid of driving through Mrs. L.'s neighbor hood because it has a reputation for being racist.

Despite these anecdotes which are, in essence related to Mrs. L.'s perceptions about race, Mrs. L. said that she doesn't really notice things like race. "I am oblivious to all of these things. I just don' think that way." In one sense, her statement is true, she seems

not to differentiate treatment of students based on their race, rather on their social class, or family situation. However, the social situations of most of her African American students are perceived as far less stable than those of many of her White students.

Another consideration that Mrs. L. did not account for in her discussion of her color-blindness, is how her color-blindness affects her African American students. Being "color-blind" means not recognizing color, which is self-consciously pervasive in the identity of people of color. In one sense, not noticing and acknowledging color is another way of not recognizing the uniqueness of each student in a classroom. Color-blindness is an important means by which white institutions maintain the status quo (Schofield, 1997). Although color-blind ideology is obvious, it is not viewed as pejorative by most white people because as part of the dominant group, they need not acknowledge their racial identity and group affiliation (Jackman, 1994).

Students of color. When discussing her students Mrs. L. rarely mentions race. The press to appear colorblind is strong among most white teachers. However, when the focus is shifted from her own perceptions of racial differences, Mrs. L. is better able to discuss the role that race plays in school. For example, she recounts a story about a group of former students who had recently harassed some African American students at Chattanooga High. Mrs. L. sees this and other isolated incidents as evidence of the type of racism that is present in society:

> We just had a problem with a white supremacist group coming in over in the park. Well, five kids that used to go to school here. And they created a whole ruckus at lunch last week.

Mrs. L. said that a group of former students were across the street at the park during lunch time. When the students came outside they were shouting racial slurs, mostly at the black girls. I asked her if any of the students came to talk about it. She said that many of the white students were really upset about it. One of the girls in her class, a white girl was

with a black friend of hers when this happened. The white girl told Mrs. L. about the situation.

> I heard about it the next day and the only people that talked to me about it were the white kids. They were upset about it. Then the kids came back the next day at lunch time too.

Interestingly, none of the African American students spoke about the situation to Mrs. L., yet she did not find this unusual. In fact she had no idea why that may have been the case.

> I think the African American population still feels that there is prejudice and nothing that anybody else is gonna say is gonna change that because I think there's prejudice too. I mean some of its subtle, some of its blatant. I think overall it's [the school] a fairly positive atmosphere for everybody.

This adherence to the belief that the school is a positive place for everybody contradicts her statements about racism being present in society. Her definition of racism is limited to overt individual interactions between people. She does not see covert individual acts, nor does she recognize organizational, societal, or civilizational racism (Scheurich, 1993).

Mrs. L. feels that since she does not really address issues of race, either in her subject matter or in her perceptions of students, that students who accuse her of racial discrimination are using it as an excuse for their noncompliance with rules. Her notion that racism is limited to overt, intentional, individual acts can further alienate students of color who feel under attack in schools.

> I think there's that general feeling that there is still prejudice in the world and that it carries over into the school and every once in a while you'll hear, "You're just saying that to me because I'm black." That tends to be a cop-out. I don't like to hear that. Usually, I'll say, " No. I'm saying that to you because you are talking." or, "you are doing this". And I give them the opportunity not to think that there's a problem here.

I asked her if she had ever spoken to her African American colleagues about these issues. She said that she had not because she did not discriminate against students of color.

She believes that the race of a teacher is less significant than the way that teacher deals with students in general. She holds the belief that students must be treated as individuals not as members of any particular group. She carries that same belief over to her discussion of teachers of color:

> You really have to be careful about just recruiting a person based on their skin color whether it be white or black. Everybody has to relate to the kids. If you get somebody who can't relate to the kids, can't control them enough to really get the message across, that's really not going to help either. I never thought of dealing with them differently based on race, you've got to deal with the individual kid. But, it might be a good, you know, a good seminar , just pointing out basic cultural differences.

Discussion

Dysconscious Racism.

Mrs. L. is clearly in conflict over the issue of race. My repeated interviews forced her to investigate race as an issue in her life as a math teacher. I did not, however, provide her with any tools to examine how racism affects society. Mrs. L. was forced to discuss race from her limited perspective as a white person who has had little experience with people of color outside of the classroom. Her perceptions and ideas about race were conflicting at times probably due to her inexperience discussing issues of race. One of the most significant and compelling facets of her talk was that she wanted to learn more about how to make her teaching more culturally relevant. Mrs. L. exhibited an open-mindedness about race that is absent from much of the literature on white teachers' attitudes towards students of color.

Like most white people, Mrs. L. has not been personally motivated to examine the ways in which society is structured against people of color. These unexamined beliefs and practices is what King (King, 1991) calls dysconscious racism. When I asked Mrs. L.

why she thought so many students of color fail at mathematics in school, she said she didn't know. She said that she felt that society was racist but was unable to identify any features that indicated racism. Her perception of high school mathematics was that racial groups were fairly well represented until about the second year.

> I did mention that when we get into the upper level courses there are a lot more homogenous groups than what I would like to see. I'm not sure where that comes from. You get the lower level groups that algebra and geometry and second year algebra, and the groups are pretty - go according to the percentages that are in the school...the group is pretty equally represented.

Despite her recognition of some inequity in mathematics education, she is reluctant to attribute the discrepancy to race; again she attributes differences to family/parental support and to the poor teaching of elementary school teachers.

> I don't believe that race is the factor there. I believe it's still family support and prior experience. And we take the kids as they come in, and they've already been through 8 years of schooling...9 years of schooling with kindergarten. I think it's something that needs to begin a lot earlier. With secondary education, you need to take the kids wherever they're at and move them along as fast as you can if they're behind. Give them as much support, give them some of their self esteem back in mathematics. I think a lot of the problems with mathematics is the teacher training that goes on in elementary school. Because I've gone to so many conferences with my kids, and they have teachers that don't like math. I mean how much emphasis are they gonna put on a subject that they don't like to teach and that they're not comfortable teaching?

Despite these attributions which might indicate a denial of racism, Mrs. L. is willing to learn more about racial differences as is evidenced by the anecdote I presented earlier when she asked me about cultural differences related to learning. She also expressed an interest in learning more about the role of social activism and equity in mathematics education.

A Product of Society and Teacher Education.

Mrs. L is not unlike most teachers. Teachers are not trained to address the cultural needs of the students of color in their classrooms. Mrs. L's reluctance to address racial differences, combined with her unexamined pedagogy has allowed her to conceive of education as removed from cultural differences and racism. Mrs. L.'s teaching has met, and in many ways exceeded, the standards of most public schools. The fact that she has not constructed a critically or culturally relevant pedagogy is not surprising, because the type of pedagogy that we call critical is not valued in most schools. It disrupts the status quo and empowers those that the system is designed to subordinate. Most teachers have never been trained in this type of pedagogy.

Mrs. L.'s vision of education is rooted in number of reasons. First, she has never had to view education through the eyes of another. As a white person she enjoys a position of privilege that does not force examination of racial issues. Simply put, she is not a victim of racial oppression. She, like all white people in this country benefit from societal racism. Secondly, society has provided a number of excuses for the failure of students of color which absolve white teachers from responsibility. Colleges of education and school systems replicate these excuses into a deficit theory to explain the failure of students of color. As Payne (Payne, 1984) suggests, the systemic oppression in our society is so endemic, fragmented, and complex that no individual has to claim responsibility for any of it. And finally, Mrs. L. has not been exposed to the theories by which I have measured her beliefs and practices. Cultural hegemony, cultural relevance, anti-racist pedagogy, and white dominance are unfamiliar terms to Mrs. L.

It is unfair to expect that Mrs. L would have examined her beliefs and practices in a racialized context. Our society's insidious inculcation of it's members into a color-blind, individualistic ideology is so shrewd that few people are exposed to an alternative ideology. Certainly, the notion of paternalistic caring is so highly esteemed in teacher education

programs and schools that one cannot see the oppression embedded in it's practice. The assumption that students of color come from less-than-adequate homes and that good teachers are sympathetic to their circumstances is an accepted norm. These assumptions have gone unexamined for so long that it would be unlikely that Mrs. L would have the knowledge to address these issues in her pedagogy.

The only exposure that most teachers get to theories of race is through multicultural education workshops. In my experience as a teacher, multicultural education is presented to in-service and pre-service teachers as a watered down version of celebrations of culturally representative heroes and holidays.

What was most impressive about Mrs. L. was her willingness to learn about different ways to teach in her classroom. She acknowledged her lack of knowledge and was willing to hear new ideas. This is no guarantee that her pedagogy will or can change, but it certainly indicates an openness to try.

Conclusion

After my observations and interviews with Mrs. L., . I explained my view of critical race pedagogy, the mismatch between the school culture and the home cultures of many students of color, and the notion that since knowledge is power, we must educate students to engage in social action. Mrs. L. seemed very interested in the idea of critical pedagogy. She said that she had never heard of them before, but was very interested in learning more about them. I am hopeful that this willingness to learn will become a willingness to experiment, and possibly change in some ways. The complexity of her contradictory statements and behaviors indicate a person ripe for change and reflection.

I have a difficult time acknowledging that White teachers do not want to address issues of race, they simply do not have the experiential tools or informational knowledge to

know what it is they should do. Teachers like Mrs. L. have a deep care for their students; they express it in the only way that their experience allows. I think by improving teachers' knowledge base about critical issues, and their practical application, more teachers can and will have greater opportunity to adopt a more culturally relevant, anti-racist ideology and pedagogy.

White teachers have not been challenged to undertake a critical inventory of their beliefs and practices because of the systemic acceptance of the status quo. Sleeter's (Sleeter, 1993) assertion that "whites so internalize their own power and taken-for-granted superiority that they resist self-questioning" (p.167) is based on an assumption that most whites have the tools available for this type of self-examination. I agree that until white teachers begin to examine their own pedagogical beliefs and practices through a lens of race, students of color will suffer. I assert then, that it is the responsibility of the critical race theorists and educational researchers to engage in action research which will find ways for white teachers to examine their practice and learn to teach students of color.

Here are some of the things that we could do to work toward that end. First we must engage teachers in a collective examination of racial ideologies and knowledge construction. Secondly, we know that we should include teachers of all races in the dialogue. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, we should reconstruct educational discourse so that race is a topic that is open for discussion and considered integral to all of the educational sub-disciplines.

Engaging teachers in a collective examination should be done on the pre-service, in-service, and university faculty level. This involves a personal commitment on the part of individuals to push the boundaries and engage in research and course development that is not always regarded as "important" by the enforcers of dominant ideology. Including teachers of all races in dialogue about racism requires a conscious effort on the part of teacher educators, principals, and superintendents to recruit teachers of color. This

conscious effort may include becoming involved in communities of color, getting to know individual people, and talking to them about becoming teachers. Recruitment of teachers of color must be an active and activist process.

Finally, reconstructing educational discourse to include race would probably have the greatest impact on individual teacher ideologies. So much of what is written in the curriculum and instruction literature ignores race. Topics such as multiculturalism, equity, and race are covered in elective courses in teacher education programs. In subject area methods courses, race does not enter the dialogue. At worst, race is treated an invisible factor in learning to become a teacher. At best, race is a side issue that can be examined, but is not central to learning to teach. The implications for placing race in the margins in teacher education are enormous. First, it perpetuates the "color-blind" myth. Secondly, it reinforces the belief that race should not be talked about. Third, it bolsters the deficit theory by placing "cultural issues" on the fringe. And finally, it reinforces and perpetuates the dominant epistemology. In so doing, white teachers are *taught* not to examine their racial positionality. As long as colleges of education continue to distance themselves from issues of equity and social justice, anti-racist education will remain an illusion.

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